United Nations A/68/PV.89

General Assembly
Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

89th plenary meeting
Friday, 23 May 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 23 (*continued*)

Eradication of poverty and other development issues

(a) Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

Meeting on achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda

Mr. Faye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to participate in this high-level meeting on achieving poverty eradication through full employment and decent work for all in the post-2015 development agenda.

Senegal associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Bolivia and Lesotho on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/68/PV.88), and would like to make a statement in its national capacity.

The Millennium Development Goals are undoubtedly one of the most ambitious initiatives for eradicating poverty and thereby improving the living conditions of populations. Despite the significant progress made, it has unfortunately become clear that the expectations and ambitions for 2015 will not be met. That has become even more apparent as recent relevant reports have highlighted warning signs that give rise to pessimism, owing to the persistence of poverty in most developing countries, inter alia, in terms of the extent of inequality, food insecurity and challenges related to access to decent employment.

Tackling underemployment, especially among young people, requires bold steps to increase people's incomes and improve their livelihoods despite the scarcity in job opportunities, which is due to the continued growth of the labour force. In addition to those factors, underemployment in poor countries is increasing due to low productivity, lack of control over the information regarding the job market, the mismatch between training and market requirements, difficulties in financing employment programmes and the lack of incentives to promote entrepreneurship for youth and women.

In addition to those bottlenecks, another salient issue is the youthfulness of the population. In Senegal, 40 per cent of the population is under 15 years old and 55 per cent is in the age range of 15 to 34 years old, in an environment largely dominated by the rural and informal sectors, which represent 90 per cent of existing jobs. That is also true for women and migrants, for whom independence is not an option but an urgent necessity. We also note a relatively high rate of dependency among the unemployed, which tends to lead to workers having incomes that are by and large insufficient to cover all their family expenses.

Despite those difficulties, it is important to note that employment remains a key mechanism

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

14-40924 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

for reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion through its ability to contribute to wealth distribution, improvements in social cohesion and access to decent living conditions and financial autonomy. As labour compensation constitutes almost all of the population's income, employment fills a social function, thus giving rise to the need to adopt effective measures based on a common understanding of the challenges related to accessing and retaining a decent job. Similarly, if employment is a cornerstone of poverty eradication, the fact remains that low income and job insecurity undermine the quality of life of workers, increase their vulnerability and affect its effectiveness as a tool in the fight to eradicate poverty. That reality, which is just as tenacious as it is cruel, deserves special attention, both within national development policies and strategies and in the post-2015 development programme, given employment's strong positive impact on the lives of populations and in reducing the risk of poverty.

In that context, the Government of Senegal has embarked on a process of massive job creation through the revival of economic activity and support for the development of private companies with high functioning labour forces, in public works, textiles and clothing manufacture, tourism, agriculture and services. In addition to the establishment of a job market information system, the Government has adopted a particular strategy based on better management and employability of the labour force, strengthening the effectiveness and the transparency of the labour market and the establishment of the national agency for the promotion of youth employment.

In that regard, my delegation believes that the post-2015 development agenda should, inter alia, focus on strategies that support the industrial transformation of developing countries, especially in Africa, and to promote a system of financing and supervision of entrepreneurship. Similarly, emphasis should be placed on priority measures, which include the promotion of tax regimes that are more favourable to productive investment projects; creating conditions that increase the level and structure of jobs in the national economy, ensuring a better consideration of employment in economic policies of the State; strengthening the management capacity of existing jobs in the agricultural and informal sectors; and the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the management system of the labour market.

I hope that at the end of this exercise the promotion of employment and decent work will find its rightful place in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mrs. Kage (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union this morning (see A/68/PV.88).

The year 2015 will be an important year in international politics. The international community will take stock of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and adopt the post-2015 development agenda. Great progress has been achieved in reaching the Millennium Development Goals. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty was cut in half, even before 2015. However, reduction of extreme poverty has not yet been sufficiently achieved. There are still some 1.3 billion people suffering from hunger. That is unacceptable.

A holistic and multidimensional understanding of poverty is needed to fight the root causes of poverty and hunger. The post-2015 development agenda should reinforce the international community's commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development and set out a single comprehensive and coherent framework. That understanding includes the necessary foundations for sustainable development such as health and education, sustainable and decent jobs, and fair income.

Germany promotes a strong emphasis on employment and decent jobs for all in the post-2015 development agenda, including the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for men and women alike, with particular attention being paid to the most vulnerable groups. We particularly support prominently addressing the respect for and promotion and realization of fundamental principles in rights at work, including for migrant workers, in accordance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Germany further promotes the establishment and maintenance of social protection floors for all, according to ILO Recommendation No. 202, including basic income security for children, elderly persons and persons of active age in cases of sickness, unemployment, disability or maternity. We also support the promotion of social dialogue, which is essential for people's empowerment and participation as well as a clear reference and target level to tackling youth unemployment.

In supporting our partner countries, we have achieved positive results through a number of measures. First, vocational education and training is directed at enhancing employability and labour supply. Secondly, labour demand interventions such as private sector development are used to create new jobs. Thirdly, active labour market policies and instruments to help new entrants in the labour market through such measures as youth social work or mentoring schemes by senior entrepreneurs. Last but not least, we rely on overall economic policy measures, including macroeconomic policies ranging from health care to infrastructure, which help to create an enabling environment.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw the Assembly's attention to a side event on youth employment that we will host together with the missions of Brazil, the ILO and WorldSkills International on the occasion of the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum on 2 June, entitled "Skilled for Excellence and Development". Actions for youth employment are urgently needed because we cannot risk losing this generation.

Our overarching vision is the sustainable eradication of poverty in all its dimensions, which has to be achieved while at the same time respecting planetary limits. Progress towards the eradication of poverty and sustainable development will not be achievable without decent work for all, and it will be meaningless if we do not also address the issues of peace and security, promote good governance and the rule of law and ensure respect for human rights for all.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): The international community and Kyrgyzstan feel the acute need to have effective instruments and mechanisms for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In Kyrgyzstan, we have taken comprehensive measures in our country's strategic documents to fulfil and implement the MDGs. In particular, in the national strategy for sustainable development, we note that the problems of human and social development of the country occupy a central place in the national policy of the Kyrgyz Republic. They include reducing poverty, ensuring opportunities to receive an education, good public health systems and favourable living conditions in order that the country's most vulnerable citizens are protected. Those goals are consistent with the MDGs; they are the outline of our country's strategy for the next few years.

The wealth of natural resources in the Kyrgyz Republic, if they are well managed, could ensure significant opportunities for economic development. Agriculture is an important sector of our economy, representing 31 per cent of our gross domestic product. Nearly two-thirds of the residents of Kyrgyzstan — 3.5 million out of 5.4 million — are working in the agricultural sector, and 40 per cent of the poor live in agricultural regions. Therefore, reducing poverty in Kyrgyzstan is directly linked to the development of the economy. As a mountainous country, we also need the corresponding capability to take effective action in emergency situations caused by natural disasters.More than 90 per cent of our country's territory has experienced over 20 serious natural disasters. With the impact of climate change, we face new threats and challenges, in particular in agricultural areas.

The difficult conditions have led to the increased migration of the working population to cities and emigration to more developed countries. In recent years, the rise in the number of people of a working age has more than doubled the employment rate. Taking into account the fact that it is mostly men who travel to find work, the number of women working in agriculture has risen and now stands at 47 per cent. A trend is emerging in Kyrgyzstan. The higher the economic development in a specific region, the greater the number of women who work, and vice versa. In effect, the rate of women's employment is its own economic barometer, determining the amount of development and the overall level of progress in the region.

Given that employment is particularly significant to the development of the country's economy, Kyrgyzstan is working to develop a long-term programme on the regulation of women's employment. The steps that we have taken have already enabled us to reduce the level of unemployment among women from 63 per cent in 2009 to 52 per cent in 2014. In order to ensure sustainable development and reduce extreme poverty, our national development plan seeks to diversify the economy by developing infrastructure in rural areas and increasing sustainable agricultural productivity, thereby guaranteeing food security and income in agricultural regions, while minimizing environmental threats. The plan also aims to develop national and regional labour markets and to improve employment opportunities through the effective regulation of labour migration and more training of the workforce.

In general, Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress and achieved the three MDGs on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring environmental sustainability, and establishing a global partnership for development. The current poverty indicator is significantly lower than the target, but we must ensure sustainability in that regard. The truth is, the global financial and political events of 2010 had a negative impact on the current poverty level in Kyrgyzstan. We need to overcome many other challenges in order to lay the foundation for the healthy development of our State, with strong democratic principles and a high standard of living for the population. The implementation of all the aforementioned measures is possible only through an effective international partnership.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I thank the President for organizing this important and timely debate.

The concept note for this meeting explores in an excellent way the challenges and opportunities in the field of poverty eradication, full employment and decent work. The Netherlands aligns itself with the statement made this morning by the observer of the European Union (see A/68/PV.88). Today, I will make three points on the link between poverty eradication, full employment, decent work and social protection. All those issues are very important to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

On poverty and employment, we feel the following. Jobs and employment must be a high post-2015 priority. More than 80 per cent of households that have escaped extreme poverty have done so because the head of the household found a job. Economic growth that favours poor people must take place in the context of sustainable development. That is the most effective way to raise incomes, generate jobs and permanently lift people out of poverty.

Growth must be twinned with economic transformation and shifting labour into higher productivity. Quality education is needed to facilitate that transformation and to move people into more productive jobs. Private enterprise provides more than 90 per cent of jobs in the developing world. The conditions must therefore be right for firms and companies to grow and, as a result, to employ more people productively and sustainably. Businesses can play a crucial role in poverty eradication and sustainable development. They must focus on innovation and technology and take responsibility for the social and environmental impacts of their activities.

Secondly, on decent work, jobs must be secure and safe and be paid fairly. People should have the freedom to organize and participate in decisions that affect them. Promoting decent work standards helps to formalize jobs in the informal sector. Women, young people and those with disabilities are often excluded from our labour markets or face discrimination when they are in the market. Access to employment and career opportunities must be equal for all. Women should have the same economic rights as men to inherit property, to sign a contract, to register a business or to open a bank account. Stigma and discrimination are often the greatest barriers to those with disabilities obtaining employment. They should be supported in obtaining and maintaining employment. A necessary condition to ensure such rights is an end to all kinds of violence against women and girls.

Thirdly, social protection should be part of a wider strategy for inclusive and sustainable growth to end poverty. It can guarantee a basic income. It will reduce barriers to accessing basic and maternal health care, nutrition, education and a healthy environment. Social protection systems must contribute to a Government's wider priorities and accompany economic transformation. Interventions need, of course, to be tailored to the country context. We must take into consideration when, why and how to use social protection systems and must first and foremost promote equality of opportunity.

To sum up, linking jobs, poverty eradication and sustainable development is vital to the post-2015 development agenda. At the same time, the focus should continue to be on the disparities in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in order to make sure that no one is left behind. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a United Nations partner for peace, just as development is our mission statement. We want to be a partner in sharing our expertise and experience with the United Nations and its other Member States in order to accelerate action on sustainable development. We will continue to contribute to the post-2015 agenda discussions.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): The United Republic of Tanzania welcomes this meeting. It is timely and an important contribution to the discussion that we should have in this forum.

We believe that employment must be at the centre of the post-2015 development agenda. The President of my country, Mr. Kikwete, has committed Tanzania to engaging in an agenda that promotes full employment and decent work at the national level. We would want to see a similar commitment to such an agenda at the regional and the global levels. In that regard, we welcome this opportunity and this discussion.

We thank the International Labour Organization (ILO) for its leadership and engagement as a party commitment to advancing that agenda not only at the international level but also, as we know in our own case, at the national level. The ILO has had unique foresight in that regard. We recall the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, which provided recommendations that remain relevant and compelling today with regard to employment, decent work and social protections.

As we formulate the sustainable development goals and as we proceed to consider a post-2015 agenda, our view is that we are not necessarily bound to reinvent the wheel. There are propositions and proposals that are worth reviewing and there are propositions and recommendations that could surely contribute fruitfully to the kind of discussions that we are having and that we must have. Our view is that we have to engage partners beyond States parties. We must engage civil society and pursue public-private initiatives to enrich the discussion we are having and to ensure that we have concrete deliverables at the end of the process.

To conclude, the United Republic of Tanzania again associates itself with the views that have been expressed by the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the representative of Lesotho, who spoke on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/68/PV.88). We are certain that, if there is a desire, progress can made because there are ample recommendations on the table. At the moment, what we need is the desire to move forward and a commitment to ensure that action is taken on the proposals on the table. The Assembly can count on our support in ensuring that progress is made.

Mrs. Byaje (Rwanda): I thank the President for organizing this important and timely meeting.

My country aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Lesotho, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively (see A/68/PV.88).

As the concept note circulated by the President highlights, the issue of sustainable development has come to the forefront of global discourse today. We believe that we need to pursue not only sustainable development goals but also a development path that advances meaningful development opportunities, including full employment and decent work. That will only be possible if we commit ourselves to uprooting the deeply entrenched inequalities that still characterize our societies today.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), outlined a broad framework for global action for the future we want and a post-2015 global development agenda. Now the task falls to us to implement it. We believe that a holistic implementation of the three pillars of sustainable development is necessary, with poverty eradication, inclusive development and environmental conservation at the centre of the future we want. The World Bank found in 2013 that nothing drives poverty reduction as much as access to jobs and increasing wages and that employment is a cornerstone for development that connects living standards, productivity and social cohesion, all of which are critical for achieving inclusive growth.

Keeping people in jobs in developing countries, especially in Africa, is a challenge. However, the challenge of poverty reduction and employment is made tougher by crises resulting from economic turmoil, armed conflict or natural disasters, which tend to worsen poverty. Special attention therefore needs to be devoted to countries emerging from conflicts.

Since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, my country has understood the importance of creating employment and decent jobs for the purposes of poverty reduction. Allow me to share some our homegrown solutions. To address the many challenges we faced as a country emerging from conflict, the Government of Rwanda adopted its comprehensive Vision 2020, which focuses on 7 per cent annual economic growth in order to reduce poverty, with job creation as one of the top priorities.

To achieve the objectives of Vision 2020, the Government implemented a short-term development plan called the Economic Development and Poverty

Reduction Strategy I, which ran from 2008 to 2012, and we are now implementing the second phase. The Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy II aims at rapid economic growth, poverty reduction, the creation of more off-farm jobs, the reduction of external dependency and making the private sector an engine of development. Equitable and quality education for improved employability should be a future development priority. Other development targets include ensuring education for all, increasing the number of vocational and technical schools, and making sure that all Rwandans have health insurance coverage, which will allow them to lead healthy and productive lives.

In the area of decent work, employment and social protection, emphasis has been put on ensuring women's equal pay with men. Rwanda has further enacted laws making possible equal land sharing and property and inheritance rights. A strong emphasis has been put on access to productive assets and financial services, agricultural supports, and technology, including information and communications technology. As far as job creation and development are concerned, the most important initiatives include the launching of the Labour Intensive Local Development Programme in 2003, and the creation of the Rwanda Workforce Development Agency in 2007.

Creating new jobs is the result of well-planned investments that take into account development activities, regional integration, the creation of reliable domestic markets, the development of flourishing business networks, support for small- and medium-sized businesses, capacity-building, adapting school curricula to modern life, reinforcing the private sector, and creating an appropriate environment for priority sectors. Our Government established a set of incentives to attract people in various activities relating to service provision and production, investment in and acquisition and implementation of technology opportunities, all of which contributes to the creation of decent jobs. While the majority of our people remain unemployed or underemployed, and are not being remunerated, we are intensifying efforts to keep up the momentum and to ensure that there are adequate jobs available for our youth.

In conclusion, let me acknowledge that unemployment and poverty reduction issues are very complex, but addressing them is crucial for peace, economic growth and sustainable development. Unemployment affects national and, by extension, international security. That is why achieving full employment and decent work requires global actions, including giving priority to transformative approaches that address poverty and employment in the elaboration and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Ms. Engelbrecht Schadtler (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/68/PV.88).

According to a recent report of the International Labour Organization, more than 197 million people worldwide are unemployed and, despite the fact that moderate economic growth is expected for 2013-2014, it is estimated that the rate of global unemployment will increase again, with 202 million unemployed in 2013 and 3 million more in 2014, a quarter of whom will be in the advanced economies, while the other three quarters will be in various regions around the world.

Job creation is an urgent need and one of the main priorities for the majority of countries. It will remain an important factor far beyond 2015. Therefore factors such as youth employment, poor quality employment and access to opportunities should be taken into account in the framework of the sustainable development goals. As countries grow and develop, labour markets, employment and lifestyles change. That dynamic has an impact on the pace and extent of poverty reduction. One of the main objectives for development is to transform the structure of production and employment.

Venezuela recognizes the range of situations that exist in terms of meeting social needs and in terms of wealth and revenue distribution. That is why Venezuela has adopted a multidimensional approach to combatting poverty, which addresses it not only as an economic problem, but as a social problem arising from exclusion, exploitation and inequality, which are generated by the prevailing international economic order. This system hinders efforts to meet basic needs, such as subsistence, protection, participation and knowledge. That is why the actions taken by the Venezuelan State are aimed at addressing the structural causes of poverty, and goals have set to allow us to to tackle other key components within our social fabric, such as the special needs of women, youth and vulnerable groups and the importance of agriculture and the informal economy, among others.

For our country, social protection is a cross-cutting issue that encompasses all segments of society through the implementation of inclusion strategies. The implementation of social missions has led to significant advances in the area of development, particularly with regard to the reduction of levels of poverty, the gradual inclusion of segments of society that had historically been excluded, the universal enjoyment of social and economic rights, a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, and the promotion of social and civic participation in public decision-making forums. Such measures are necessary in order to eradicate poverty and build a society of free and equal citizens.

In the current context in which we continue to suffer the adverse effects of the global economic and financial crisis, we must maintain the commitments taken on by States to ensuring that development assistance is not reduced. In that connection, States must also adopt appropriate measures to respond to the crisis, for example continuing to focus on creating decent jobs and ensuring that the benefits reach the most vulnerable groups.

International cooperation — such as the commitment of developed countries to allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance, as well as South-South cooperation, technical cooperation and the exchange of best practices — is essential to the promotion of development. It is also crucial to carry out the necessary reforms of the international financial and economic system in order to make it more democratic.

Employment connects people to society and the economy in which they live. Access to safe, productive and fairly paid jobs — either salaried positions or self-employment — is fundamental to the self-esteem of individuals and families. It affirms their sense of belonging to a community and allows them to make a productive contribution. The move towards inclusive and sustainable development will not be possible if millions of people are denied the opportunity to earn a living in decent and fair conditions.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 23?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.